Exploring Problem & Solution Spaces Through Storytelling

TACIT Knowledge Alliance & Systems Thinkers Anonymous

Who’s involved in TACIT?

Academic partners
- Exeter University
- HHL Leipzig Business School
- SDU

Industrial partners
- Lufthansa Systems
- Torbay and South Devon NHS

Other partners
- ISPM
- ASIN

Budget
999 561 EUR (2016-2018)

What’s TACIT all about?

Overview
The objective of the project is to combine the efforts of business and university educators to create new learner-centred teaching methods, open up new learning opportunities and develop practical application of entrepreneurial skills.

8 distinct sub-projects...
- Storytelling
- Peripatetic Learning
- Future learning
- Entrepreneur laboratory
- Innovation theatre
- Innovation games
- Design making
- Project-based learning

...led by partnerships...
Each approach is being explored by a different project group. Each is led in partnership between a University and an industrial organisation.

Learning to teach...
As well as exploring the concepts and practices in each of these areas, the project will develop new approaches to teaching them and Innovation Management more generally.

This is about “Storytelling”
Along with University of Exeter and Institute of Torbay & South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, Systems Thinkers Anonymous are primarily involved in the “Storytelling” strand of the project.

The Storytelling Research Group

Research Group
Exeter University (UK), NHS Horizon Institute (UK), Lufthansa Systems (Germany)

Objective
Over 3 years, TACIT will develop a coherent innovation narrative linked to suitable boundary objects such as the Business Model Canvas, Lego Serious Play and others.

Areas of investigation
Investigating storytelling as a method to address innovation challenges inside organisations in a variety of forms, including; as a carrier of messages; exploring perspectives and problems, as a framework for ‘pitching’ ideas; exploring the future; as a coordinating mechanism; or vision statement.

Experimental (year 1)
This year, the research group is running a series of workshops. Storytelling is being used to describe and explore innovation challenges in real life and helping to understand unmet needs.

Specific examples
We are using storytelling to explore the innovation process in dealing with a challenge in an NHS Acute Medical Unit (AMU) Relocation Project

Storytelling

What is Storytelling?
All innovation projects, require ‘pitching’ the idea to others to secure resources, commitment and support. This places emphasis on the need to develop a compelling narrative which can unfold as the innovation develops. There are a wide variety of storytelling techniques, including but not limited to the following:

Different forms:
- Digital storytelling
- Storyboards
- Video Storytelling
- Animation
- Talk or text and image

Business Model Canvas (BMC)...
In addition to these methods, Business Model Canvases are being given particular attention.

...a systemic & dynamic....
It is a systemic technique that explores not only the component elements, but their interrelationships in a dynamic way.

...iterative approach....
It is iterative, evolving as the story emerges. It lends itself to reducing uncertainty in the innovation of new ventures, typically characterised by learning and experimentation.

...easily shared
A BMC is easily available for sharing with others, fostering discussion and enabling co-creation.

Why should INCOSE members care?

Problem Space Exploration
Storytelling is all about exploring, understanding and defining messy, wicked problems. They’re different ways to explore and structure those problems. They don’t explicitly sight Systems Engineering, or Systems Thinking, but the crossover is substantial.

Complimentary Soft Systems approaches...
This approach is ideal for human centric problem situations such as service provision. It is the authors’ particular interest to determine whether the approach might compliment, or even offer an alternative to Rich Picture creation in approaches such as SSM.

...and also Hard Systems Approaches
It may also be appropriate for traditional Hard Systems Approaches, where user requirements are not well understood.

Building bridges
This project, and “Storytelling” in general, offer a bridge between traditional Systems Engineering and the Design and Innovation communities.

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